

POLITICS AND MORALS

of politics from morals in a little book which
 is still very
 much alive. Numberless rulers in all times and
 countries had
 anticipated in practice the advice which he gave
 in *The Prince**
 but the thought of the Middle Ages ran on
 transcendental lines.
 Its publicists strove to deduce the maxims of
 statecraft from the
 teachings of the Old and New Testaments, and
 even the worst
 monarchs paid lip-service to the Christian creed.
 By contemptuously brushing aside all religious and
 ethical considerations, and approaching the problem of
 government in
 a spirit of naked realism, the audacious
 Florentine thinker,
 far more than Columbus or Copernicus,
 Erasmus or Luther,
 ushered in the modern world. For the
 dominating intellectual
 feature of the last four centuries, as Lecky
 pointed out long
 ago, is the secularization of thought. The spell
 of authority
 had been broken before Machiavelli sat down
 to write; but
 it required a thorough-going pagan to preach
 the gospel of
 pure empiricism and to turn his back on the ideas
 of a thousand
 years. It is true enough that he was primarily
 concerned with
 the fortunes of Italy, distracted as she was by
 the torments of
 invasion and civil strife; and his book closes
 with an appeal
 to the House of Medici. In *The Prince*, however,
 as with
 Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, it is
 not the chrono-
 logical setting but the conception of the nature
 of man and
 society that matters to us to-day. It is one of the
 merits of
 Machiavelli, and one of the sources of his
 enduring influence,
 that he says precisely what he thinks.

Let us recall some of his familiar maxims, set
 forth in the
 level tones with which a clinical lecturer
 explains the nature
 and maladies of the human frame. " He who
 neglects what
 is done to follow what ought to be done will

sooner learn how
 to ruin than how to preserve himself. For a
 tender man and
 one that desires to be honest in everything must
 needs run a
 great hazard among so many of a contrary
 principle. Where-
 fore it is necessary for a prince to harden
 himself and learn to
 be good or otherwise according to the exigence
 of his affairs.
 For if we consider things impartially we shall find
 some things
 in appearance are virtuous, and yet, if pursued,
 would bring
 certain destruction; and others, on the
 contrary, that are
 seemingly bad, which, if followed by a prince,
 procure his